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SUBJECT: DPRK PREMIER'S VISIT TO CHINA: SIX-PARTY TALKS,
MISSILE LAUNCH AND RESPONSE, HUMANITARIAN AID

Classified By: Deputy Political Section Chief Ben Moeling. Reasons 1.4
(b/d).

Summary

1. (C) DPRK Premier Kim Yong-il made the rounds of China's top leaders during his March 17-21 visit and addressed "regional and international issues," according to an MFA readout. Post-visit official platitudes highlighted both countries' aspirations to "achieve more progress" in the Six-Party Talks, and an MFA official acknowledged that Chinese leaders discussed with Kim the DPRK's plans to launch a "satellite" in early April. Chinese VFM Wu Dawei and Japanese Six-Party Talks envoy Akitaka Saiki separately discussed the issue of a launch, without coming to agreement. The Japanese floated the idea of a preemptive UN statement, at which Wu balked, countering that if North Korea were to launch a satellite, the international community's response should be "measured." The Chinese also proposed a Six-Party Talks plenary meeting after a brief "breathing period" in the event of a launch. The MFA official said China would provide humanitarian aid to North Korea in 2009, but that it would be "no different from previous years." End Summary.

China Promotes Six-Party Talks Progress

2. (C) DPRK Premier Kim Yong-il visited China March 17-21 to help mark the 60th anniversary of Sino-DPRK ties and to celebrate the designation of 2009 as the year of Sino-DPRK friendship, said MFA Asia Department DPRK, ROK and Mongolia Division Deputy Director Bao Xuhui during a March 25 briefing for the U.S., Japanese, Singapore and European Union member embassies. Kim began his visit in Jinan, the capital of Shandong province, where he met with provincial Communist Party officials and toured a greenhouse. In Beijing, Kim met with President Hu Jintao, Premier Wen Jiabao and National People's Congress (NPC) Chairman Wu Bangguo. Wen raised four suggestions to strengthen Sino-DPRK cooperation: 1) continue high-level exchanges; 2) promote economic and trade cooperation; 3) increase cultural exchanges; and 4) strengthen bilateral coordination on major international and regional issues.

3. (C) Bao said China and North Korea hoped to "achieve more progress" in the Six-Party Talks. The talks were an effective mechanism which would lead to the eventual denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and the establishment of a regional security architecture. China urged the Six Parties to push for progress in realizing the September 19, 2005 Joint Statement. On verification, Bao said that discussions had stalled but urged all parties to promote progress on the issue. North Korea agreed to listen to Chinese views and expressed willingness to cooperate with China on regional and international issues, according to Bao.

China and DPRK Exchange Views on Satellite Launch

14. (C) Kim told the Chinese that North Korea had a right to the peaceful development and use of space-related technology and had announced its plan to launch a communications satellite in early April to "the relevant international organizations," according to Bao. A successful satellite launch would provide a technical boost to North Korea's space capabilities, Kim continued. Bao reiterated to the assembled diplomats Chinese views on North Korea's proposed satellite launch, saying that China had "noted" DPRK preparations to launch a satellite and "urges relevant parties to work together to maintain peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula." According to Bao, Kim "fully understood" China's position and said he would report back to DPRK leaders. Bao said he had no information on whether North Korea had invited foreign observers to view the launch.

15. (C) In response to a question about whether China and North Korea had discussed a possible international community response to a launch, including the possibility of a UN Security Council Resolution on North Korea, Bao replied that China "had noted" recent UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office statements that a missile or satellite launch by North Korea would be a violation of UNSC Resolution 1718. Bao urged relevant parties to have a "cautious attitude" and to adopt a "wait and see" attitude regarding the launch.

China Urges "Measured" Response to Satellite Launch

BEIJING 00000780 002 OF 002

16. (C) Separately, Japanese Embassy Political Counselor Hiroyuki Namazu told PolOff on March 24 that Japanese MOFA Six-Party Talks envoy Akitaka Saiki had discussed a possible launch with Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Wu Dawei on March 23. Namazu said that Saiki sought Wu's support for a Japanese proposal favoring a preemptive statement at the UN opposing any planned DPRK missile launch. Wu did not embrace the suggestion. Wu urged caution and told Saiki that all parties would have to watch and see what North Korea does. If the DPRK were to launch a missile, it would be important to know whether it was launching a satellite, Wu said. Wu told Saiki that he had attended some of the recent meetings Chinese officials had with DPRK Premier Kim and that Kim had noted in those exchanges North Korea's desire to develop a communications satellite capability. Wu suggested that the international community's response to any launch should be "measured." He agreed that there would have to be a "breathing period" in the Six-Party Talks in response to a launch but advocated that that period should be brief and that there should be a plenary meeting, or at least a meeting of "a couple of" the working groups, "soon."

Free Aid to North Korea?

17. (C) Regarding a February 4 North Korean report that China had offered "free aid" to the DPRK during Chinese Communist Party International Liaison Department (CCID) Director Wang Jiarui's January visit to Pyongyang, Bao said that China had a tradition of providing aid to its neighbor and would continue to provide "as much humanitarian assistance as it could." This year, China would provide aid to help North Korea overcome some difficulties and help improve the lives of its people, but it would be "no different from previous years." Bao declined to specify the amount or type of aid that China provided to North Korea.

Kim Jong-il Visit to China?

18. (C) When asked about media reports that Kim Jong-il might

visit China this year, Bao said that China and the DPRK have a tradition of high-level exchanges. Premier Kim Yong-il had extended invitations to Premier Wen and Chairman Wu to visit North Korea. China had also conveyed an invitation to Kim Jong-il to visit China, said Bao. On a separate note, when asked whether Kim and Chinese leaders discussed the topic of North Korean leadership transition, Bao replied, "this is a state sec ret for North Korea."

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